UNITED
NATIONS

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Secretariat

ST/IC/1996/40
9 July 1996

INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: DEPENDENCY BENEFITS*

1. The purpose of the present information circular is to inform staff at Headquarters, United Nations information centres and field missions of the revised procedures for the submission of claims for dependency benefits and for reporting changes in their dependency entitlements. In order to streamline the current procedures for the processing of dependency benefits, it has been decided to discontinue the annual distribution of the status report and request for payment of dependency benefits (P.84) form. As a result, many staff members will no longer have to submit any form for purposes of dependency benefits. This will be the case for staff members without dependants; staff members in the General Service and related categories who are in receipt of a dependency allowance for children in their custody under the age of 18 years; and staff members in the Professional category and above who are in receipt of a dependency allowance for children in their custody under the age of 18 years in lieu of payment in the form of salary and post adjustment at the dependency rate. However, staff members who are in receipt of dependency benefits are reminded that it remains their responsibility to inform the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) of changes in their family composition or changes which affect the payment of their dependency benefits without being prompted by the receipt of the P.84 form as was done in the past.

2. Under the provisions of staff rule 104.4, staff members are required to notify the Secretary-General in writing of any changes in their marital or dependency status. In addition, staff members in receipt of dependency benefits must submit each year documentation substantiating their continued entitlement

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to receipt of the benefits. Staff members in the General Service and related categories who are in receipt of dependency benefits for their spouses, dependent children between the ages of 18 and 21 years, and/or secondary dependants are required each year to submit documentation substantiating their continued entitlement to the benefit. Similarly, staff members in the Professional category and above who receive their salary and post adjustment at the dependency rate and/or are in receipt of dependency benefits for their secondary dependants or their children between the ages of 18 and 21 years are required each year to submit documentation substantiating their continued entitlement to the benefit.

3. The eligibility criteria for the receipt of each type of dependency benefit, i.e., dependent spouse, dependent child, secondary dependant, are provided in the annex to the present circular. The documentation which must be submitted to OHRM each year for continuation of the benefits is also specified in the annex.

4. **Staff members who were in receipt of a dependency benefit in 1995 and who are required to submit documentation for continuation of their benefits in 1996 must forward a memorandum, together with the requisite documentation, to the appropriate cluster of the Operational Services Division, OHRM, by 31 August 1996. The memorandum must include the staff member's index number and his/her department and section.** The clusters can be reached as follows:

Cluster IV (covering EOSG, OIOS, DAM)
Room S-2400

Cluster V (covering DESIPA, DDSMS, DPCSD, ICSC, UNJSPF)
Room S-2427

Cluster VI (covering DPKO, DHA, UNSCOM)
Room DC1-200

Cluster VII (covering DPI, DPA, OLA)
Room S-2475

5. The information provided to OHRM will be reviewed to verify staff members' continued entitlement to dependency benefits. **FOR THOSE STAFF MEMBERS WHO DO NOT SUBMIT THE REQUISITE DOCUMENTATION BY 31 AUGUST 1996, DISCONTINUANCE OF THE BENEFIT AND RECOVERY OF ANY OVERPAYMENT WILL RESULT.** Prior to the recovery of any overpayment and in accordance with normal procedures, staff members will be advised in writing of the action by OHRM and the reasons for the recovery. Recovery will be made through deductions of 20 per cent of the staff member's net monthly salary (excluding United Nations Federal Credit Union deductions) until such time as the full amount is recovered. In instances where the duration of the staff member's contract does not allow a deduction at as low a rate as 20 per cent, the overpayment will be deducted at a monthly rate sufficient to recover the full amount by the contract expiration date.

6. The Office of Human Resources Management will monitor proper reporting and will conduct audits of staff members' entitlements to dependency benefits. **Please note that failure to report relevant changes in family composition or**

other changes which affect the payment of dependency benefits, as well as negligence or misrepresentation of facts, may lead to disciplinary action.

7. The present circular supersedes information circular ST/IC/1995/35 and Add.1.

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ANNEX

Eligibility criteria and documentation required for receipt of dependency benefits

Dependent spouse

1. A dependent spouse shall be a spouse whose gross occupational earnings, if any, do not exceed the limit established for this purpose in staff rule 103.24. For New York, the earnings limit for 1995 was US$ 28,357 and for 1996, the amount is US$ 29,152 (gross salary in effect on 1 January of the year concerned for a staff member at the G-2, step I, level). For a spouse working in a country other than the one of the staff member's duty station, the earnings limit is the gross salary of the lowest entry level of the General Service salary scale applicable in the country of the spouse's place of work. In the case of staff in the Professional category and above, the amount of the earnings limit shall at no duty station be less than the equivalent of G-2/step I for New York. The above refers to salary scales in effect on January of the year concerned.

2. Staff in the General Service and related categories will receive for a dependent spouse, the spouse allowance established for the duty station. Staff in the Professional category and above and in the Field Service category will receive a dependency benefit in the form of salary and post adjustment at the dependency rates. The amount of this benefit is the difference between salary and post adjustment at the single rate and salary and post adjustment at the dependency rates.

3. When the spouse's occupational earnings exceed the established earnings limit, no dependency benefit (spouse allowance or dependency rates of salary and post adjustment) will be paid in his/her respect. However, an adjusted dependency benefit may be paid when the spouse's gross occupational earnings are less than the sum of the earnings limit and the appropriate dependency benefit. The adjusted benefit will be equal to the amount by which the sum of the earnings limit and the appropriate dependency benefit exceeds the spouse's gross occupational earnings.

4. **For staff with a dependent spouse, the required documentation to receive or continue to receive a benefit will be the proof of occupational earnings, i.e., W-2 form, tax return or statement of earnings from the spouse's employer.**

Dependent children

5. As defined in staff rule 103.24 (b) and paragraph 3 of administrative instruction ST/AI/278/Rev.1 on the definition of dependency status, the following children may be eligible for dependency status:

(a) A staff member's natural child;

(b) A staff member's legally adopted child;

(c) A staff member's stepchild, if residing with the staff member;

(d) If legal adoption of the child is not possible because there is no statutory provision for adoption or any prescribed court procedure for formal recognition of customary or de facto adoption in the staff member's home country or country of permanent residence, then a child in respect of whom the following conditions are met:

(i) The child resides with the staff member;

(ii) The staff member can be regarded as having established a parental relationship with the child;

(iii) The child is not a brother or sister of the staff member;

(iv) The number of children for which dependency benefits are being claimed by the staff member under this subparagraph does not exceed three.

6. For any of the above-mentioned children to be recognized as a staff member's dependent child, the following requirements must be met:

(a) The child must be under the age of 18 years; or, if the child is 18 years or older but under the age of 21 years, he/she must be in full-time attendance at a school or university (or similar institution);

(b) The staff member must provide main and continuing support for the child.

The age and school attendance requirements indicated under (a) will be waived if a child is physically or mentally incapacitated for substantial gainful employment, either permanently or for a period expected to be of long duration.

7. A children's allowance is payable for each dependent child of a staff member. In the case of staff in the General Service and related categories, the amount of the children's allowance is established for each duty station. In the case of staff in the Professional category and above and in the Field Service category, the amount of the children's allowance is that established in staff regulation 3.4. This benefit is granted subject to paragraph 9 below.

8. However, in the case of a staff member in the Professional category and above or in the Field Service category who has no dependent spouse, the staff member will receive for the first child, in lieu of the children's allowance, the dependency rates of salary and post adjustment. For payment of a dependency benefit in respect of a child in the form of salary and post adjustment at the dependency rates, staff rule 103.17 (b) (ii) requires that the staff member provide substantial and continuing support for one or more of his/her children. For the provision of such support to be recognized, the sum of the staff member's (a) gross salary less the difference between the single and dependency rates of net salary and (b) post adjustment at the single rate, must not be less than two thirds of the gross occupational earnings of his/her spouse. If this requirement is not met, the staff member will receive salary and post adjustment at the single rate and dependency allowance for the child. **In order to verify**

this information, staff members will be required to provide proof of their spouse's occupational earnings such as the W-2 form, tax return or statement of earnings from the spouse's employer for 1995.

9. If a staff member or his/her spouse receives a dependency benefit in the form of a government grant in respect of a child, the amount is subtracted from any dependency benefit payable by the United Nations in respect of that child. The total amount of any such grant received in respect of each child, the country from which the grant is received and the currency (if other than United States dollars) of the grant should be reported to OHRM.

10. It is the staff member's responsibility to give written notice to his/her Human Resources Officer if his/her child marries. If the staff member continues to claim the child as a dependant, documentary evidence satisfactory to the Secretary-General is required under paragraphs 13 and 14 below for the child to continue to be recognized as his/her dependant.

11. It is also the staff member's responsibility to give written notice to the Human Resources Officer if his/her child ceases to be in full-time attendance at an educational institution. The staff member is required to submit a certificate of school attendance for his/her dependent child between the ages of 18 and 21 at the end of each school year, **except for the staff who are entitled to and submit a yearly education grant claim.** Failure to submit the school certificate will result in discontinuance of the dependency benefits and in recovery of any overpayment. The dependency status of a child between the ages of 18 and 21 continues through a period of vacation only if the child enrols for full-time attendance after the vacation. Otherwise, the dependency status ceases as of the last day of attendance of the preceding school term.

12. **For staff members with dependent children between ages 18 and 21, school certificates of full-time attendance for the current school year are required for continuation of the benefit. Certificates must specify full-time attendance and the period of the school year as well as the dates of attendance. The certificate must bear the school's seal, the official's name, signature and title and the address and telephone number of the school. Forms on which the school may certify attendance are available through the human resources officers.**

13. In addition to the staff member's certification that he/she provides main and continuing support for the child, documentary evidence of such support satisfactory to the Secretary-General will always be required if a child:

(a) Does not reside with the staff member because of divorce or legal separation;

(b) Is married;

(c) Is regarded as a dependent child under paragraph 5 (d) above.

14. **For staff members who do not have custody of their dependent children, the following documentation is required:**

(a) A notarized affidavit from the custodial parent stating that the staff member provides main support and specifying the amount of support provided;

(b) Proof of all payments made in 1995 as described below:

- **Original cancelled cheques;**
- **Money order receipts;**
- **Wire transfer receipts; or**
- **Bank transactions.**

Secondary dependant

15. A dependency allowance is payable in respect of only one secondary dependant. It is not payable for a secondary dependant if the staff member is already receiving dependency benefits in respect of a dependent spouse. A secondary dependant may be the father, mother, brother or sister of the staff member of whose financial support the staff member provides one half or more, and, in any case, at least twice the amount of the dependency allowance. In the case of a brother or sister, he/she must be under the age of 18 or, if in full-time attendance at a school or university (or similar educational institution), under the age of 21. However, if the brother or sister is either physically or mentally incapacitated for substantial gainful employment, either permanently or for a period expected to be of long duration, the requirements as to age and school attendance will be waived.

16. **Staff members who receive an allowance for a secondary dependant who does not reside with them must provide documentary proof that support is at least twice the amount of the yearly allowance and confirm that they provide half of the dependant's total support, and also provide proof of all payments made in 1995 as described below:**

Original cancelled cheques;

Money order receipts;

Wire transfer receipts; or

Bank transactions.

Staff members whose secondary dependant resides with them must provide a notarized affidavit from the secondary dependant, stating the amount of the staff member's financial support and that he/she continues residing with the staff member.

Designation of beneficiary

17. Staff members are required under staff rule 112.5 to notify the Secretary-General of any revocations or changes of beneficiaries. A beneficiary for the purposes of the rule is designated at the time of appointment on the

"Designation, change or revocation of beneficiary" form (P.2). Staff members, particularly those who made the designation at the time of their appointment many years ago, are urged to review, through their Human Resources Officer, whether their original designation is still correct and to make any changes thereto if they wish.

18. It is also suggested that staff members take this opportunity to examine their original designation of beneficiaries for the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund and for the Group Life Insurance Plan. Notification of changes should be sent to the Secretary of the Pension Fund, room S-765, or to the Insurance Section, room S-2755, as appropriate.